




The Final Draft

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DURHAM TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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The Literary Society of
DURHAM TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Proudly Presents

The Final Draft

Volume 9, Number 1
Spring 1999

ORIGINAL AND PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED WORK OF
OUR TALENTED STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND STAFF

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Poetry

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Canticle of Love

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Third Place

We Danced for a While

By Nelle T. Turner

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D u r h a m

They call it the City of Medicine,

Then where is the cure?

Hunger, poverty, violence...

What is the answer?

We need to work together,

Lend a "helping hand."

We are all family, trying to survive

In this society, that doesn't give a damn.

—Cathy Guthrie



Gifts

*It is said that parents
Ultimately
Have only two things
To give their children:
Roots... and wings.
Is this not also true
Of those who teach in colleges?
The objective of any course:
Include the content
And acquaint the student
With the required course material,
And, just as surely,
That course should give
Each student wings,
To go on to further study
Or out into the world,
Applying the insights and the skills,
And making that world a better place
For all of us.*

— Dr. Charles L. Wood

She Sang of Fairy Tales and Fireflies

She sang of fairy tales and fireflies

Who was she?

no connection

catching fireflies reminds me of a winter's day

there was no snow

and the stars cried out for Christmas

like some bug in the air

dreams are different

catching sand in between deserts

the dog awaits an invitation

I should be learning something new by now

opening up

to the presence of the nature

the natural miracle of compassion

there was a good vibe in the air

my heart is not closed

heat of summer

heal my soul.

—Nelle T. Turner



We Danced for a While



*We danced for a while
And something in your smile touched me
Your soul outstretched
And I see the difference now
The difference we made together
If it was just me alone
I never would have picked up the phone
To call when things were not okay
Just me alone would not have had the courage
To learn the things I needed for me.*

*I was frightened once in a while
And you lent me your smile
We took each other as far as we could go
And promised to return to Self*

*I look at the life I used to know
When I was unconscious and sad
And somehow you made me feel glad
Like there was something about me that was right
That I did not yet know*

*It was a confusing time
Adolescence and thereafter
As if I am just entering adulthood
It is difficult at times to align
With that part of me who wants
The best for myself and others
You showed me how...
And now I see I through your eyes.*

—Nelle T. Turner



“Grandma Marvel”

Webster says marvel is *something that arouses curiosity*.

He wrote that without even having known my Grandma Marvel, a fitting foreshadowing of this woman who I wouldn't be surprised to also find her under *simple*.

Often it is those simple things that are the most wonderful, invocations of curiosity.

To a young child's mind, Grandma was anything but simple.

It is she who topped my list of wonderments.

It is she, who in her ways, showed me how to taste life.

Together we tasted and tasted until I was filled with reserves enough to get me through until the next summer.

I was fourteen the summer Grandma and I ate together for the last time.

I remember waking at the break of day to the smell of Folgers and propane.

Mama warned that coffee would stunt my growth, but Grandma knew that letting me stir a heaping spoonful of dark instant crystals into my very own cup was a way to help me grow.

We sat staring into orange flames rubbing our fuzzy bootie-socked feet together listening to the alternating pop-creak rhythm of the stove and Grandma's rocker, the one that now makes a new music in my sitting room.



We took turns smearing our lips with Grandma's favorite red lipstick,
glossing them with watermelon flavored balm--
Loaded our purses with fresh packs of Freedent gum and headed for town
for our annual shopping spree which always ended in Grandma's favorite—
greasy cheeseburgers and large frosty rootbeers.

We had to get home in time for General Hospital, which Grandma watched
every day, her built-in alarm clock always waking her up just in time
to catch the suspenseful ending, our cue to get supper going.

The smell of propane was intoxicating alone; mixed with the odor
of burnt chicken hairs, it bordered on inebriation.
She held those pieces of chicken over the flames with a skillful tenderness
only a farmer's wife could master, as she told me again how she
loved the chickens on the farm--so much, Grandpa Ernie had to break her heart to
keep the family fed. One year for Christmas he bought her a glass chicken candy
dish, knowing it was one he'd never have to kill.

At the end of every summer I'd cry, thinking I'd never come back;
that fourteenth summer, I shed enough tears to carry her spotted tiger lilies
through a drought,
the same lilies I would cut down as her final farewell.

Webster says that *marvel* is a wonderful thing.
but he says it best with a *miracle*—
a sweet simple miracle.

—Trace Boley

THANK YOU FOR THE JOURNEY

Thank you for the journey; the way I never knew. The way I never would have ventured if it were not for you. During this journey, I've learned how to ease my pains and overcome my fears. I've gained an inner strength I never knew I had. I've learned to see people, places, and this world, my world, and myself from different points of view. I've even learned how to view you.

THANK YOU FOR THE JOURNEY

I've fortified weaknesses and gained new strengths. I've learned how to comfort. I've learned how to love. I've learned when to fight, and what's worth fighting for. Most people know how to fight, but few know the significance of what they are fighting for.

THANK YOU FOR THE JOURNEY

It's been a long journey, but I'm not at the end; I'm simply looking back to reflect and examine where I've been. I see the things left behind. I see the things I've lost. I see the things I've gained. Most importantly, I see the things of value have remained.

THANK YOU FOR THE JOURNEY

It's not time to take a few more stops and see where this road leads and to discover the things that are still yet to be. But before I could continue, I had to stop and reflect. Most of all, I had to tell you, "thank you for the journey." Thank you for helping me to find me.

—Sheila L. Baker

Photographer/Writer

me

I often get real high
then take a look below
I see the many torn up houses
and I want to take a picture. . .



but I stop
I see three little children
playing with a ball
and I want to write a story. . .



but I stop
I wonder why I was chosen to be up here
and them below
I spend all of my money on good pens and film
and they,
they are struggling for food
I wish I could step down there
to know how it is
to be able to write and take pictures
from a different perspective
from different shoes
but I'm too nervous
scared
yet I can't stay up here
I'm too comfortable
kind of like a fork in a handful of spoons

—Cathy Guthrie

The Eyes Tell All

Look into the eyes
the eyes tell all.

Look into the eyes
what do you see?

Look past yourself, look past the color;
look past, look deep, get lost and remember.

What do you see?

The conniving, the deception, the clear, the innocent.

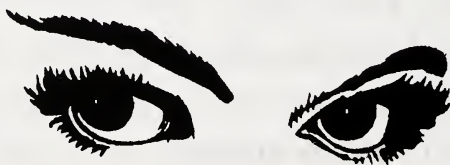
Are you the tears of the hidden, yet not shared?

Are you the friendly back stabber, the cunning,
or the lonely scared?

Don't try to hide. Don't try to blink.

The mouth may be quiet, but the eyes tell all.

—Maria Maschauer



They Came to You with Eyes of Hope

They came to you with eyes of hope
believing you held a secret
only they knew within their souls
as if you were the keeper
with the keys to the Kingdom
and you considered them Friends
who waved a guiding hand
we sat in the presence of a man
who devoted his life to God
and the common good

You asked no one to arrive
you shone the light on the path
the journey is the same, though we take different roads

I thought I might not cry for you this time,
the way I used to for June

I was wrong
somehow the distance does not feel so great
is it that I have surrendered to these things inside of me that tend
to blind me to the purpose in my life
perhaps I have grown and grieved

She says most of the time when she is asked how she is
that she is fine
for fear or truth that those asking may not want to know
it hurts her so, this world without you
and I think now I understand
there are many clocks inside this castle
and the wheel of life keeps spinning
circular, not linear
one step forward two steps back
the strength it took to cry for the nipple
or to make an independent decision, not knowing repercussions

You find me in places I never imagined
in ways I never dreamt up here on a hill
in God's Country.

—Nelle T. Turner

To Chapel Hill

Two roads diverged in the woods.

Robert Frost

You were an overnight notion,
an afterthought at most, for young travelers,
Passersby in search of
a distant Shangri-La
perchance a new Atlantis
brought forth from a new sea
We stayed.

The oaks, the pines, the curving roads,
the hill,
became a quilt.

The children came, and grew, and went.
I rest, a foreigner still,
among your winding streets,
and yet, the pine roots
have found the fissures of my soul.
Here I will sleep.

—Marife Vallecillo

Goin

No way

No way of knowin'

Which way the wind will be blowin'

pushin' and blowin'

to where

to where the winds will be goin'

Bringing me home

Along with the sparrows

Flowin' with the blowin' wind

Goin' to my chance of goin'

Better to be goin' 'cause the wind won't cease its
blowin'

Until I'm gone

Come away to see the sparrows

Flyin' free in the wind

Not left behind to die

The wind leavin' him behind

to die

'Cause the wind won't cease its blowin'

Until I'm gone

it will be blowin'

So I am gone.

—Jana Leigh Chovanec



To the Poet Laureate

(For Fred Chappell ,Autumn 1998)

**Was it the old Crone who raked
Her fingers across your face,
Branding you as her own?
Or Calliope, etching her musing
Into your skin?**

**As you begin, the clues surface:
Sources and springs of mountain
speech,
Craggy rocks of wit and wisdom,
Foggy hollows of haunted despair,
Your grounds of being and having been.**

**"Page 498 in your anthology," you say,
And fingers rush to rustle tissuey pages,
A biblical noise of compliance,
Aweful deference to the wreath of laurel
Anointing your oil-tamed hair.**

**You pause for "Second Wind."
And in that breath the indwelling ruah
Summons fragillties of rue anemone
Unearths coffins full of squirming words,
Plums depths of dank drowning pools,
Inspires a transforming spread of peacock feathers.**

**Poet? Priest? Preening Professor?
No matter.**

**Your leaves have made you whole.
Your Moses face gleams from seeing God.
And you command our state.**

—Bonnie Stone



It's History

Transcending all known time and space
the memories of then have been erased
did you really think there's nothing
left to lose?

Misguided quest for acquaintances
friendships change or didn't exist
did you really think you had the right
to choose?

I ask you what you think my friend
tell me can you see the trend
is it just me or are we slowly
falling?

Trendsetters pass the torch to clowns
fearless crusaders claim the crown
one by one we leave our mothers
crying

Vending machines dispense our pain
since the dawn of time we've been insane
does anyone get the point?
I really doubt it

The art of the day is blend the shades
in the end it always fades
do you really think there is no point
in trying?

The lotion is now officially gone
the motions now are too withdrawn
is there any way we can ignore
what's going on?

—Bret Wilson

The War Maimed

**New York City
Veteran's Administration Hospital**

Tip...

Tap...

Tip...

tap...

Silently walking in time.

Indifference mixed with pain.

Eyes, gone;

**Left on some forgotten
strip of land;**

But still walking:

Tipping...

Tapping...

tipping...

tapping...

--Marife Vallecillo



Echoes of The Great Nations



I have stepped on the paths where the ancient ones walked
and I have felt the spirits of a thousand seasons
Their voices speak to me from places long gone
I feel the stirrings deep in my soul of the Hunt and the War drum
The splendor and hardness of the land only add to its beauty
Giant stands of sandstone and granite appear as sentinels to sacred sites
The echo of 10,000 hooves hang in the air as I wander about the plains
Tears and blood of Warriors past have painted the desert and named it
Time will pass, new memories will form and become history
Nature will continue to carve upon the face of once great nations
Neither time nor nature will change the path of the wandering spirits
Cries of WAR and JOY, wails of GRIEF live deep within this land
FOREVER will stand, the MAGNIFICENCE,
the BEAUTY,
and the MEMORY
of THE GREAT INDIAN NATIONS

—Marshall M. Burke

This is the Night the Angels Ordained

*This is the night the angels ordained
I am the song of the Negro slave
every twenty four hours I was contained
We sat by the fire and Grace fed our souls
taking us higher*

*to that promised land
We may get there today yes, yes we may*

*You have had me shackled and chained
now from your prisons I am arraigned
and they call this justice
or something that fits the way we prey upon today
as though it were ours and not the Gift of the Giver
Our Father who art in heaven
I hear Your Kingdom is coming
I will meet You on that track someday
You will set this soul free
We fly in my dreams we take off to other lands
Our minds cry out for change in this world
hear our pain.*

*I am the song of the undernourished babe
this is what you taught me, to scrape and save
but now there is nothing left for my parents dying
I am orphaned on your shores
you have left me crying out for more
I am starved in your wake
there are millions of my brothers and sisters
for your justice I trade my life
to cocaine, crack, methamphetamine, malt liquor, heroin
for I was hungry and that is how I shall die,
addicted to my pain.*

*I am the song of the one who was wrong, child for the things I said to you
perhaps you had too much spirit and I wouldn't let my own shine through
how can I ever make it up to you?*

*I might even ask your forgiveness
admit the defeat you must have seen from so early on
I am sorry and this is my song
to try today to never do you or me wrong again
your life gives me hope and strength
we can walk this road hand in hand
here is my heart I trust in you to carry on this light
I pray long after I have departed this Earth
you are my light and I am your song
Go sing and dance rejoice this path has custom footprints that fit you.*

*I am the Giver of all life
bearer of all truth
Creator of Love
I have spoken more times than any others
through friends, lovers, and enemies
I have tried to balance this planet and make it right with the universe
one day I pray you may decide which road is right
realize you never have to hide behind a wall of your desires or take credit for
the gifts I have bestowed upon you
in my eyes your humility is a prize
I have given you tears of joy, now go and cry
I have set before you life and death
now you decide
I am your Mother and Father
I am the One who knows you like no other
I am Truth, Beauty, Wisdom, and Light
In Me you are perfect
Dwell.*

..Nelle T. Turner



Forgive me
THE FOLLIES OF MY GROWTH

IN MY YOUTH, I CHASED THE ELUSIVE
POT OF GOLD AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW
ALWAYS BELIEVING THERE WAS PLENTY OF TIME
AND THE FUTURE WAS TOO FAR OFF TO
WORRY ABOUT
MY EARS WERE DEAF TO THE INSTRUCTION
OF PEERS AND ELDERS, NO MATTER HOW
CONVINCING
IN THE FORMIDABLE YEARS, THE CALL OF THE
ROAD
WAS STRONGER THAN THE VOICE OF MY
FAMILY
MY DESTINY WAS IN THE ADVENTURE OF LIVING
LIFE
NOT IN ESTABLISHING STABILITY AND
GOALS
THE SOUND OF MY MOTHER'S BREAKING HEART
AND LONELINESS
I MISTOOK FOR WHINING AND ATTEMPTS
AT CONTROLLING

IN MY MIDDLE YEARS, I BEGAN TO SEE THE
JOYS AND ADVENTURES I HAD MISSED
WHILE AWAY
I RETURNED IN TIME TO RECEIVE THE PAIN OF
MY FAMILY MEMBERS' FADING LIVES
I REALIZED THE TIME CLOCK OF LIFE DOES NOT
ALLOW FOR SPLIT SHIFTS OR OVERTIME
IN MY WANING YEARS, I AM FINDING
I AM THE VOICE OF THOSE PEERS AND
ELDERS
THE ADVENTURES I SO VIGOROUSLY
SOUGHT
ARE MEMORIES OF A TROUBLED,
LONELY YOUTH
THE SOUNDS OF MY BREAKING HEART
HAVE FEWER AND FEWER EARS TO HEAR
THEM

FORGIVE ME MY EMPTY DREAMS;
FORGIVE ME MY DEAFNESS;
FORGIVE ME MY LACK OF
UNDERSTANDING;
FORGIVE ME, THE FOLLIES OF MY GROWTH

-- Marshall M. Burke

THE TEST

IT SEEMS THAT WE ARE ALL DOOMED
TO LIVE A LIFE FULL OF PAIN.
MOST LIFE EXPERIENCES ALWAYS
BRING US THE UNEXPECTED
LIKE HAIL AND RAIN.
SURELY THIS IS ONLY A TEST OF OUR FAITH
AND OUR ABILITY TO PERSEVERE.
SOMETIMES THE ROAD THAT LIES AHEAD
WILL BE OBSTRUCTED
HOWEVER NOT VERY VISIBLY CLEAR.
BUT JUST WHEN YOU FEEL AS IF YOUR WORLD
HAS BEGUN TO CRUMBLE.
YOU MUST THEN COLLECTIVELY GATHER YOURSELF
AND ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES AND TUMBLE.
AND AT THE SAME TIME REACH DEEP DOWN
WITHIN YOURSELF AND FIND THE INNER STRENGTH
TO REMAIN HUMBLE.

-- DARIN T. STEELE

The Table

across the table
these matters mean
misery and mourning

death of the bluest
crystal in the youthful
eyes I used to stare at

Is it up to me
to tell you that you're wrong
demons of Christ

I guess it's my ugly fate
this is my conversation
with GOD

He's sitting across the
table from me saying
we need doctors of
the cross to help us
out of this mess

crying in the deepest corners
of my heart, crying into
my breakfast with him
across the table

-- Cris Inscroe

Street Smarts

my mom always told me that helping others
was the name of the game
that got me nowhere... society took advantage of me
I found myself on Ninth Street
one day with 7 dollars in my pocket
I meet a guy on the street
named Jeff
Jeff told me that he was my friend that he would teach
me how to rule the hood
I took a walk with Jeff down the street
we stopped in the Cosmic Cantina, where I bought
him a beer
Jeff sat back, took a sip of his beer and said,
"Lesson number one...DO NOT TRUST ANYONE!"
he sat back in his chair closed his eyes and
mumbled something under his breath
I sat back in silence and thought about what he said
"Lesson number 2" Jeff screams, "Do what you want" he
continued
"when you want" getting louder "and how
you want."

he takes a breath and another big gulp of his beer
Jeff pauses, gets out a half smoked cigarette in his pocket
and lights up

he takes a drag then just sits with no type of
expression on his face

I look over not knowing what to think
and just continue to sit in silence
time passes so I tap Jeff on
the shoulder and ask him about number three

"Lesson number three is one that you should
know,"

Jeff says while staring directly in my eyes
"live each and every day to its fullest because,
yes, tomorrow is another day,

but will it be one that you will see?"

Jeff then drinks the rest of his beer and walks back out
to the street

I follow him and signal for a taxi
I give the guy my last 5 dollars and then tell
him to take this wise man home

-- Cathy Guthrie

untitled

they say that time flies when you're having fun...
i'm not having fun,
yet time is going by so fast, that i can't keep up
i'm just slowly tagging along
while things keep changing
(except for me, i'm still the same)
i know it always gets worse before it gets better,
but how bad does it have to get?
why can't someone give me a hand
or just explain it to me so that i can understand?
i want out, but is that an option?
when will this madness stop,
or slow down just enough to let me take a quick
breath?

-- Cathy Guthrie

DIVERSIONS

Intentional diversions
Purposefully anticipated
Unable to mask motivation?
How come he flies by night?
To proclaim the day!
No longer abandoned dreams
For far off lands call
SCREAM
Astronomical boundaries are loudly interrupted
Interrupted?
Perhaps.
More of myself to give
Giving freely, real-giving,
Poorly viewed universal predictions of sanity
Or insanity, was it?
Failing memory
Encompassed in soul-searching validity.
No spiritual openness, oneness.
Only life worth living is it
is it
Is it?
Senseless sanity
Sanity is Lost.

-- Jana Leigh Chovanec

Unwanted

Crying,
I call out your name,
Saying stop and listen.
Don't you hear me when I cry?
Saying,
I need someone to hold,
protect,
and cherish me.
Can't you hear me when I scream?
All I am asking for
is your attention,
your kindness,
your affection,
and your tenderness.
Don't you hear me shouting?
Yelling,
as I once again say your name.
Asking why?
Can't you love me for me?
Don't you want to cherish,
comfort,
and provide for me?
Can't you hear my pleas?
Angrily, I yell your name.
Saying,
I demand that you love me.
After all,
did you not help to create me?

-- Lydia Fontenelle

STAR

my
mom
told me
to always
reach for the stars and if I were
to ever tip over and fall
down, then I should try
to land on my
back, so I could at
least dream about
one day catching
one in
my arms

-- Cathy Guthrie

Me

Why did they give glasses
to make me see such a cruel world
I'd rather be
the way I was before
blind but free
Sobbing
on the shower floor
my tears mixing with the grime of my day
why is it always me
It never stops
my inner agony
screaming pounding beating to a useless voice
I stare in the mirror
and again I wonder
why is it always me

-- Spring Blachly

#1

reminiscing the house
on Birch Avenue
805 2nd house on the
left FrEedOm
in the woods
dancing
in the
rain
cool droplets
rolling
down my nude body
forming
a
puddle
around my
dirty toes
flinging
my long tangled hair
until I get dizzy
then
fall on
my
bottom...
and do it again.

-- Cathy Guthrie

Journey

one

2

three

JUMP

scream to the top of your lungs

and

SHOUT

come on girl...

let it all out

Free, free

you and me

you've got shot gun

in the old chevy

it'll take us there

on a one way trip

to an unknown land

filled with unknown people

starting all over again and again

no one can stop us

'cause there is never an end!

-- Cathy Guthrie

Lately I've Been Thinking About You

Lately I've been thinking about you,
thinking and crying.
Thinking about how hard it was to please you,
Thinking about the time mom ran away,
Thinking about how much you would love your granddaughter
if you could meet her.

Lately when I'm driving,
I'll get that feeling in my stomach.
That feeling that creeps up into the back of my throat
and makes me feel that I'll throw up.
Wishing to God that we hadn't gone on that vacation
when we knew you were so ill.

I remember returning to that filthy house,
finding you agonizing, bedridden.
I knew you were dying, but my god,
My God, how you writhed in pain.
It is that vision, among others,
that lately I can't seem to shake.

This is the tenth anniversary of your death.
Ten years and I am still that child.
Now I'm a mother too.
I pray that someday these dark and bitter memories
will fade, leaving me happier ones
to make me cry.

I know that it's because of you that I hate myself.
I know that it's because of you that I lose my temper.
I know that because of you I will never throw away a book,
never pass a poor man without offering to buy him a sandwich,
never see a poor girl with a poor father and not know
how much he loves her.

I close my eyes and you are here with me.
Hold me please and make this sickness go away.

-- Alia Namaste Granger

TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND

your laughter was infectious
and still rings in my ears
the sharing of your life
is known by many--and more
boy scouts will become old men
and remember the name "LIMEY"
from a street named "BRIGHTON"--
YOU--emitted a special light
the "corn" of your humor was always
"a-MAZE-ing"--get it?
ten-speeds, camp stoves, and old blue vans
will always give me cause for a smile
you balanced disability with accomplishment
and life with lightheartedness
you accepted little, gave much
and left a wake of mirth and wonderment
rest my friend and know
your life has been *LIVED*--not spent

-- Marshall M. Burke

Scratches My Itch

Funny how an empty page
Riles up an anxious rage
Longing with an itch to jot
And tell what is or is not
To delve within to bring without
The underlying seeds of doubt
Open to unhide the fears
Of days ahead and future years
The secrets of my soul to bare
Exposing only as I dare
The logic that becomes my sense
The purpose for my actions hence
Provoking thoughts which taking root
May expose my motives moot
Revealing vagueness that I dread
Which hobbles 'round inside my head
And causes this cruel page to glare
When its face is still so bare
Always knowing it will lead
I bravely take my pen with speed
Onward to extract the pain
Yes, the anguish will remain
Until I can confront the source
And crush it with exceeding force
With words for that is all I know
I pray with dignity will flow
I seek to liberate my mind
My peace to loosen and unbind
So I can feel the joy I must
Clean the cobwebs and the dust
My values will not compromise
Position taken to apprise
The truth is what I live to see
The truth is what has tickled me

— Denise Duncan

The Way I See It...

The way I see it
rain come in Autumn
glances at your picture
once maybe twice
but there is never an answer to winters calling
what she wants she wonders
wandering among
the trees dropping their leaves barely turning from green
we look behind to see
summer was only a sinner
lustful in her longing for more
insatiable in her appetite
the water we swam in was too deep
barely kept afloat
soon the lakes will ice over and we won't need another lover
only the solitude of our surrender

I give to you the moon of the harvest
and she will shine
as I walk among the clouds though my feet still touch the
ground
I've been here before touched the same sea
I found in your eyes countless times
devoured my hunger for pain
because you understood me as a child
yet respected me as a woman
and touched me after the drought
rain came down said hi i'm low this is not a love song
I can't even see your smile
bend me break the resistance in my legs a while
and sit under the stars and gaze at
God.

Ashtanga II

-- Nelle T. Turner

Lone

Declare the declaration of a desperate man

Coyotes' train; the victim's hunt

of waves crashing Solitude

Canvas of silicon skies

Beyond the Captain's chartered seas

winds in sand blown desertions

Quiet abandoning, abandoned already.

-- Jana Leigh Chovanec

I've Been a Woman Before...

I've been a woman before
I've cut vegetables at this sink
I've been a woman before
my breasts were larger
I had many children
sweat dripping down down down into eternity

I've been a woman before
shattered and battered
bruised and abandoned
admired from afar
the girl at the end of the bar
awaits the back seat of your car
when she will be the star

I've been a woman before
traveled the road that leads to hatred and self loathing
regret and misery
when the world seemed to turn against me
really me vs. Me the real battle waged inside

I've been a woman before
I know the karma of betrayal that rose only left me with thorns
ashes for the memory of the dreams we burned so hastily
seething jowls of madness in the wake
for the one who was going to break my heart again
I saw you coming this time, saw the redness in your eyes
bloodshot I am surprised I did not take you

I've been a woman before
I've seen the beloved walk out the door
waited for him to return
nevermore nevermore
my eyes tell the stories of a thousand lives
and not so picture perfect wives
but I've known man too.

-- Nelle T. Turner

TRUE LOVE

In the beginning, it is written,
The man and the woman were naked, and were not
ashamed.

Is this not a beautiful picture
Of what true love is really like?
Two people face each other
In that openness of total honesty
Which the nakedness symbolically represents;
For in true love, we bare
Not only the body but the mind and soul
To one another.

Perhaps this is why our marriage vows
Speak eloquently of "Truth,"
And ancient word for truth;
Binding us in a mysterious and life long sacrament
In which we commit ourselves to that total truth
Which has flowed between man and woman
In the context of true love
Since the beginning of the world.

-- Dr. Charles L. Wood

WANDERER LOST

traveling on these roads
I realize my ignorance
like a wide-eyed child, I stare,
with passing wonder, thought-like awareness,
into the corridors of dreams
all the missed freedoms chances at differences
outlooks of altering exposures
to experiences designed to broaden
teach what I know
in myself dawning awareness
clouding my downed fortress
harder to see
as a blind bird
in circles flies
I wander and wander and wonder and wonder
searching for forever
for forgotten hazy pictures
entering into my view
guiding my paths
unconscious reoccurring visions
-- Jana Leigh Chovanec

Canticle of Love



*Hear the sage as his song descends
like heaven's rain or tears and
washes away the years dust from
the many stories*

*For in ages deep, past and
forward in the first bush of
the word when the full moon
lost from the lap of the forest
Love, terrible and great has
made war on the heart of mine*

*Yet out of the darkness of
death, out of my cries for
light in the blank face of
the pale moon, soaring out
of the blackness a light flared
it was a knight of truth and power
brought light and called dawn
into my life*

*God, himself forged the
mighty Lance of life
piercing the soul of mankind
driving their evil
thoughts from the Irish
shores of my heart*

-- Cris Inscocoe

La guerra
José Agustín Goytisolo

War
translated by Patricia Wellington

Suddenly, the air
swooped down, inflamed,
falling like a sword
on the land. Oh, yes,
I remember the cries!

Between the smoke and the blood,
I looked at the walls of my homeland,
as a blind man I looked
everywhere,
looking for a bosom,
a word, something,
where I could hide the tears.

And I encountered only death, ruin and death
below and empty sky.

En la inmensa mayoría
Blas de Otero

Within the Immense Majority
translated by Lynn Chien

I will lack air,
water,
bread,
I know I will lack.

The air, which no one owns.
The water, which is for the thirsty.
The bread... I know I will lack.

Never, faith.

More with less air.
More with greater thirst.
Neither more nor less, more.

Canción de Jinete
Frederico Garcia Lorca

Song of the Horseman
translated by Andrew Bonner

Córdoba.
Distant and alone.

Dark pony, large moon,
and olives in my saddlebags.
Though I may know the roads
I will never get to Córdoba.

Through the plains, through the wind,
black pony, red moon.
Death is watching me
from the towers of Córdoba.

Ah, what a long, slow road!
Ah, my valiant pony!
Ah, how death waits for me,
before I come to Córdoba!

Córdoba.
Distant and alone.



La Plaza
Ángel Valente

The Town Square
translated by Dorothy Dean

The stone is
firm and anonymous.
The columns hold
with gravity the welcoming shadow.

Here somebody spoke
perhaps to a united mankind
in their hope.

Perhaps then
life truly had
a common cause and
it was the nation's.

Cásida del sediento
Miguel Hernández

Casida of the Thirsty
translated by Stephanie Eamons

Sand of the desert
am I: desert of thirst,
Oasis is your mouth
Where I will not drink.

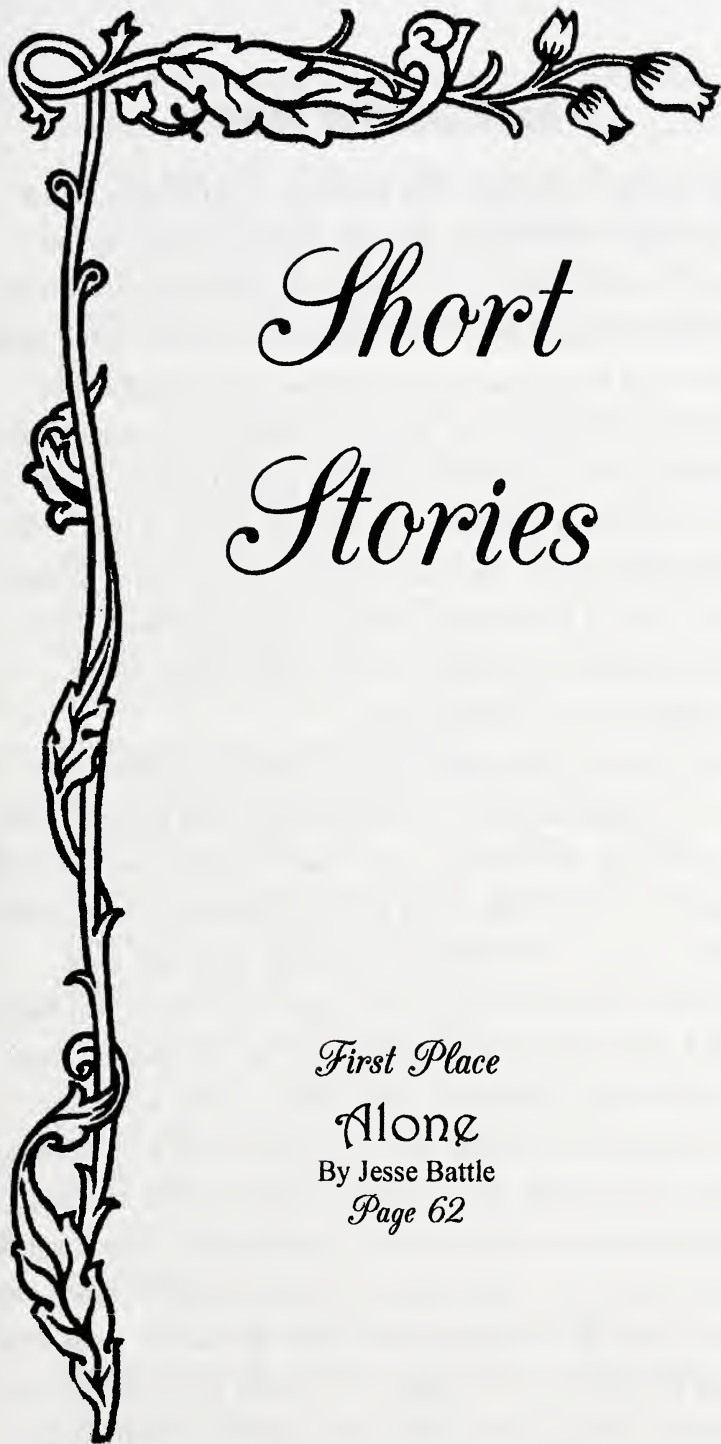
Mouth: oasis opened
to all the desert sands

A moist middle in the midst
of a burning world,
that of your body, yours,
that never is of both

Body: a closed well
that thirst and sun have burned.



By Denise Duncan



Short Stories

First Place

Along

By Jesse Battle

Page 62

The Banister Man

He stood at attention, like a soldier -- motionless, like a statue. She didn't notice him when she first scrambled up the stairs and past him to find the room that she and her sister would share. Their *old* house didn't have stairs inside, and it didn't echo. Her mother said this house echoed because it was empty. She hopped up on the radiator, so she could reach the venetian blind cord. Looking out, she saw their station-wagon parked in the driveway, and the big truck that had all their stuff in it was in the yard. Her mother called them all to the top of the stairs. When she could count six little heads, her face became serious. She used that you-have-to-be-quiet-to-hear voice of hers, as she warned them about the Banister Man.

He seemed harmless enough; he was small like her, but sturdy. Her mother said that the Banister Man had *business*. His job was to hold up the banister rails. One long arm went down the stairs, turned an elbow, then went the rest of the way down, and curled like a spring. The other arm was very short and went straight across the top balcony to the wall. Her mother said that they all had better stay off the banister and that the banister man would tell her if they disobeyed. He could see them whenever they were upstairs, so she said they had better ALWAYS behave.

Her brothers and sisters were looking over the balcony, and someone dropped a penny down just to see how long it would take to hit the bottom. She wanted to see, but couldn't reach over the top, so one of her brothers put his arms around her waist from behind and lifted her up -- too high. Screaming and grabbing the banister man's arm as quick as she could, she felt herself going

over. It was a long way down, and she was reeling. Her mother grabbed her and pulled her back, then scowled at her brother in a huff. He said that he had hold of her and that he wouldn't have let her go. Her mother said for him to hush and for everyone to STAY OFF the banister! Then she ordered them to follow her downstairs to help unload the truck.

The others went on, but she sat down there at the top of the stairs near the banister man and leaned up against the side wall, still a little ruffled. Staying out of the way was a good plan for her, since she was too little to help much. The bedrooms and a bathroom were on one side and the stairs on the other, but right in front of her was the banister man. She couldn't see which way he was turned, so she crept closer. His funny square hat bothered her. She got up and tried to take it off, but it was stuck. Checking him carefully, she tried to find his eyes, nose, or something. Nothing. She wanted to try to see down again, so she got on her tip-toes. It was no use. She knew that banister man would tell if she pulled up on his arm. She put her face close to the rails to see if she could see the penny that was dropped. Her little face fit through. Why didn't she think of this before? She looked down, then she stretched her neck to see as far as she could. She turned and smiled at the banister man, because she was smart enough to figure out how to see down... without getting into trouble.

She could see the penny next to the bottom step. Knowing that her brothers and sisters had forgotten about it, she decided to go get it. When she pulled back to get up,

her head bumped the rails. Wiggling and pulling, she tried over and again, but she just couldn't get her head out. She began yelling, "Let me go! ...Mommy! Help! He won't let me go!" Her mother came running to see who was picking on her, and said for her to hush when she saw what happened. She said that all her crying was only making it worse and that she should know better than to stick her head through banister rails. Everyone came to see what was going on. One of her brothers said that they might not be able to get her out, and one of her sisters said that she would bring her food, but using the bathroom was going to be a problem. Her mother said for all of them to hush. They tried every way without success, until her oldest brother said that she had to go back out the way she went in, not backwards. They turned her around, so she was leaning back and looking up. Her head came through, almost as easy as it went in. Whew!

She was so tired and her neck and ears hurt. Her mother wagged her finger and said that she could lay down as soon as they got her bed put together, but in the meantime, she should stay out of trouble and out of the way. She went down and sat on the porch, so she could watch the boxes and furniture being carried inside. Her mother finally said her bed was ready and that she should go to the bathroom and get to bed. Heading toward the stairs, she saw the penny still there at the bottom of the stairs, picked it up, and carried it upstairs with her. As she turned the corner of the stairs she looked up and saw him, and she got mad. She ran all the way up to him and growled, "That's the last time you

get me, Mr. Banister Man!” She threw the penny at him, but he didn’t flinch.

After getting ready for bed and getting her kisses goodnight, she grabbed up her Pogra and used that you-have-to-be-quiet-to-hear voice of hers, as she explained to him that he had *business*. It was his job to keep an eye on that Banister Man!

--Denise Duncan



To Seek, is to Find

The night was cold and lonely; not even the stars would reveal their presence. It was a night when two criminal-minded predators were closing in on their prey. My partner or I spoke no words as we closed in on our victim. We both knew what must be done. According to the laws of the concrete jungle, no man is able to set up shop on another's block. This fool disrespected those laws. This fool disrespected my partner and me by doing so. So now he must pay, for according to the laws, if he does not we would soon be the prey.

As we reach our destination, our victim's car is nowhere in sight. We immediately take position in the shrubs that surround his house. The shrubs are perfect for our ambush as they cast long shadows into the night. I hear the sultry sounds of Anita Baker as I settle in for the wait. For what seemed like an eternity, we waited. Finally, a car stops in front of the house and our soon to be victim steps out with a friend. I gaze over at Jell-O. I see his head nod within the shadows, confirming what I already know.

Jell-O and I spring from the shadows when our victim and his friend are halfway up the walkway to the house. The guns begin jumping in our hands, each sending tickets of death speeding toward their victims. Our victim immediately falls, but his friend staggers and begins reaching in his coat. My ticket holder begins to send death through the air repeatedly. As they reach home, our victim's friend begins to perform a macabre dance as death arrives. I walk over to Jell-O as he stands above our squirming blood-soaked victim. "Don't seek death, let death find you," I say to our victim with words laced in ice. "Do you see him," I continue, "do you see the man who wears the black suit and walks with a cane. If you do not, I am here to inform you that he is here.

Death is here.” Our victim opens his mouth in a silent blood filled scream. The guns continue to bark in our hands as his head explodes sending crimson colored rain over the yard. We turn to the sound of a woman screaming on the porch, with our guns raised to silence her. “Honey?” “Honey!”

The sound of my wife’s voice snaps me out of my nightmare. My eyes fall back to the newspaper article that caused it, “man killed in drug raid.” The man it is referring to was Jell-O. We have not seen each other in over eight years, not since I decided to get out of the game and venture into a new life. My wife and I have raised our kids free from the hell known as poverty. Due to hard work, we have escaped the crime-infested neighborhoods that litter our city. The newspapers thankfully remind me each day of the misery that I left behind. I am equally thankful for having a family that loves me as much as I love them.

“Are you okay,” my wife asked me with concern littering her voice. I nod my head yes as I watch that ever-present smile reappear on her face. She has not changed much since the day we met. She still possesses that hourglass figure she had then. However, after the children were born she has gathered a little more sand at the bottom than before. She was the main reason that I got out of the game in the first place. She showed me that there could be a better way of life than the one on the dark side that I was leading. As I watch my son of seven and daughter of five come barreling into the kitchen, she was right. I quickly roll the newspaper up and place it where the rest of my past is, the trashcan. For I am a man who does not seek death anymore. I have come to love life and there are three reasons why in this kitchen with my now. “Don’t forget,” my wife says to me. The look I give her asked the question what: the look she gives me back tells me that I had better remember. I remember, tonight I have to take her mother to bingo.

I give her the look of acknowledgement as I get up to leave. I beckon my son to come and join me on my trip.

As we ride, my mind is filled with images of the past that have always haunted me. I see the woman screaming on the porch. I see the fire leap out of the gun that Jell-O holds. "Bong, booonggg," I hear the horn of the angry driver of the car behind me as the stoplight has changed to green. With my mind back on the task at hand, I precede to take the quickest route to my mother-in-law's house. The chattering that took place in the seat beside me stops, as my son looks at the hellspawn that have emerged at night. The streets are lined with winos, prostitutes, dope fiends, and drug dealers. In my haste, I have taken him into the devil's domain. My foot grows a little heavier on the gas pedal as I control the escape. Once the chattering begins again, I know that the escape was successful. My wife says that I am overprotective of him. In a way I am, I just never want him to become involved in the nightmares that plague me daily. "We are almost there, do you want to stop and get a soda or something?" I asked the little man beside me.

Now you know we are gonna have to wait," I continue, "for you know how grandma moves."

"Like molasses," my son quickly pipes in. Laughter fills the car as we turn into a store about a block from our destination. My son begins to roll off his list of wants as he comes around the car. Wants that I do not hear. I stand transfixed by the shirt that the woman standing there wears. The shirt sends memories flooding through my mind. My eyes close as I try to ward the memories off. When I open my eyes, the woman is no longer there. I begin to scan the parking lot for her, wondering was she ever here? As I continue to look, my son races past me heading for the store, eager to fill his wants. "She must have went inside the store," I say to

myself, “either that or I am going crazy.” The sound of the gun blast instantly brings me back to reality. I rush inside the store where the blast came from, only to be greeted by the sight of my son lying on the floor. The white shirt that he wears is quickly turning red. I look up to see the gunman who was robbing the store standing there mesmerized as reality sets in that he just shot a child. The words of the shirt again fill my brain, the words, “you reap what you sow.” “You reap what you sow.” I begin walking toward the front of the store where the robber stands. I pay no heed to the robber’s cries to stop as I walk on. I see his hand jump as it sends death my way. I walk on. The world turns to slow motion as I walk to meet the man who wears the black suit and walks with a cane. I see him walking towards me as I walk on. My life plays in my mind as I walk on. I hear the words of death as he stands in front of me, “I found you.” Our embrace is my peace from the nightmares of yesterday that plague my today.

--Jesse Battle

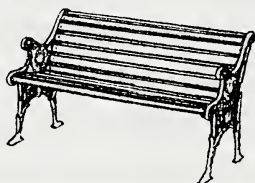




Along

Prologue:

“Beware the beast man, for he is the devil’s pawn, he kills for sport, for lust, for greed. He will murder his brother to possess his brother’s land. Shun him, for he is the artisan of death.”



The bench that I sit on begins to feel like rocks. Yet, I do not rise. I have nowhere to rise to. In a once beautiful park, I sit alone. In a once beautiful city, I sit alone. In what was once a great nation, I sit alone. On what was once a great world, I sit alone. Thanks to the madness that laid in the hearts of men, I will forever be alone. My destiny was sealed when the first missile was detected in the air. Then there was a second, then a third, and a fourth. All of the missiles were originating from a region of the globe not thought to have nuclear capabilities. Yet, all were on their way to nations with nuclear capability. The leaders of these nations immediately suspected one of the other superpowers of having a secret base. Therefore, they each begin retaliating against an unknown enemy. Then the unknown enemy,

who was not an enemy until he was fired upon by the nations who were retaliating against the enemy who had never fired. Confusing, very, but this confusion ended my world.

Now, I sit alone wondering what will tomorrow bring. Will it bring the sound that I have waited so long to hear? The sound of someone yelling, "Is anybody there?" "Yes, I am here," I scream at the top of my lungs, words that are only heard by dead trees, dead bodies, dead dirt, dead animals, and a dead earth. So now, I sit alone pondering the reasons why man committed suicide.

One reason that I sit alone is greed. The desire of man had shifted from helping others into having more than others. In my world that was, the more you had was the more you were. This was the reason the damn missiles were even needed, simply to keep one nation from having more. Nevertheless, what is a nation, it is no more than a man. It is a man who holds the life of many in the palm of his hand. They are no more than boys who still want to play war in the sandbox with their little army men. Sorry thing about this is, when these boys play war their little soldiers return home in pine boxes and not plastic ones. We were fools I believe, to be so obsessed with the scandals of wrong doing by these boys, but we kept our fate in their hands. We were fools who paid the ultimate price. They fought for a world that I now have. "I have it now," I scream to no one. "It's all mine, it's all mine," I repeat as the tears well up in my eyes and my head falls into my hands. Damn man and his violent ways.

Violence, or the love of it, is another thing that killed

my world. Violence became amusing, not something wrong. I remember growing up in an era when you did not have to lock your front door. I remember watching a movie and being horrified by the antics of James Cagney, for those things did not happen in the utopia that I called home. However, I learned of the violent ways of man. I learned as a nineteen-year-old boy with no more knowledge of the world than Greg Brady and the rest of his bunch. I was but a boy when I was sent into Dante's Inferno. What I learned in the jungles of Vietnam soon made me a man. A man to this day I hate. I have often heard the question asked, "What happened, what happened to the glory days when you could walk down the street safely? What happened to the days when you could turn on the TV and not see somebody being killed? Why, are our kids killing each other or killing themselves?" My answers to these questions are simple. What happens when you let over a thousand trained killers back into a peaceful society that scorns these killers because they did not kill enough to win? What happens twenty years later when these trained killers are the ones producing your TV shows and movies? What happens when these trained killers are the fathers of kids who care nothing about killing? What happens when the world that trained these killers lets its petty issues snake into the playground? What happens is that you have chaos, and that is one of the reasons why this trained killer sits alone. Another reason is the omnipotent attitude that took control of man.

The quest of man to be close to the being who walks amongst the clouds doomed my world. To get to the being

who walks above us, you had to live right. Nevertheless, how can you say you are living right, without saying somebody is living wrong? For there is no wrong without right or no right without wrong. Man believed this being is all-powerful and all knowing and that it does not make mistakes. Therefore, in believing that, I must believe that he knew what he was doing when he created everybody different. The last time I checked different was the opposite of same. So how could man have the audacity to believe that since we are all different, that we must live and believe the same? If a man did not call this being the same name as I did, he's wrong. If he did not worship as I did, he is wrong. If he did not live by the same morals as I did, he is wrong. This attitude of racism is what separated the race once known as man. The attitude of how right I am and how wrong you are. However, what is right, what is wrong? You could have taken the smartest and most brilliant man of this once technologically superior society and place him amongst a tribe in the rain forest who worshipped the river god. This once brilliant man would become no more than an idiot, for he does not know the language or the custom of the people that surround him. Yet, he would come back and say that these are primitive people, not worthy of his intellect. However, I wonder would these primitive people be alive today if it was not for his intellect. Therefore, who were the truly primitive people?

“Yes, I am here,” I scream an answer to the question that is not asked. I hear the only sound that I have heard in the months since we came up from our basement tomb. The

thunderous anger of the being that walks amongst the clouds raging at what man had done to his masterpiece. I feel the drops begin to fall as the angels begin to cry. The rain burns as it washes over the sores that cover me. The same sores that covered the woman that I loved before I committed the act of euthanasia to spare her the pain that they caused. Now, I wish for death and the reunion that it would bring. The words to a long forgotten song pop into my mind. The words, "don't fear the reaper, don't fear the reaper." I understand what they meant now, for sometimes, sometimes death is better.



Epilogue:

The crowd at Central Park stops and stares at the man who screamed "Yes, I am here." They stare at the man who sits alone on the bench. They see his tear-stained face. They look into his lifeless eyes. "Shut up you bum," one yells. As the others turn and walk away.

--Jesse Battle

Why I Don't Wince at Road Kill Anymore

... and Why I Still Do

Last Sunday, on old Chapel Hill Road, this old Ford LTD Wagon literally inches through the fog. I mean, it's as if the driver hasn't taken the car out of park.

Some really depressing music pops up on the radio. It's all about "What a drag it is getting old."

Gloomy Joseph Telegen thinks to himself from behind the wheel, "This is a perfect example of what's wrong with this state. If you're in a bad mood, you may as well turn your damn radio off." His internal brooding is interrupted. He makes a sickly sound.

"What's the matter?" asks happy-go-lucky Joey Telegen from the shotgun side.

"Road Kill," Joey murmurs. It's kind of obvious he doesn't really want to continue this particular subject any further, but Joey's the kind of guy who'll talk your ear off even then. Especially then.

"You know," says Joey defiantly, "Road kill used to bother me too. I got over it though. Now, I don't even wince.

"Does this make the dork think he's somehow reached a higher state of maturity?" wonders Joseph aloud. He has this embarrassing habit of thinking aloud just when he's trying his hardest not to be confrontational. Joey laughs a laugh that somehow confirms his maturity and sense of security, which Joseph has always craved.

"First of all," Joey begins like Johnny Cochran preparing to address a jury that knows little but needs little to be persuaded, "The damn thing was just a tree-rat, no big loss."

Joey sighs hopelessly.

"More importantly," Joey continues, his volume swelling, his confidence building in a frightening way, "I agree with Shirley Maclaine, He's got a good chance at coming back as something

better.”

Joseph isn't just hopeless now. He's confused by Joey. Appalled by Joey. Most of all, He's pissed at Joey. “What the hell are you talking about?” he roars.

Joseph loses control of the car for a split-second. It's a good thing it's early on a Sunday with no traffic, because if there were traffic, the wagon would have had a head-on collision with a car going the other way. “Jesus Christ!” Joey hollers gleefully. Joey's indignant, like some annoying video store clerk who's convinced that his opinion has merit. “Shirley Maclaine is like me. She believes in reincarnation. Don't worry, that stinking carcass we saw back there'll probably be a dead ringer for Kim Basinger in its next life.

When Joey gets going on a tangent like this, it's hard for anyone to keep up, let alone a depressed loser like Joseph. Joseph can't see the road. I mean he can, but he can't. He sighs. The car stops crawling.

“Joey, you drive. I don't want to get into an accident.”

“You're so temperamental this morning. All right, switch with me.”

Joseph carefully gets out, as Joey dives across the front seat. Joey almost takes off without Joseph.

Joseph laments again: “Joey sometimes I can't even believe I bother trying to reason with you. Who wants to be reincarnated into a human anyway? Right now, I'd rather be a tree-rat.

Joey sighs: “Don't be ridiculous. You'll feel better soon. Just let me take over now.”

Joseph smiles a little. He can't help it. He knows somehow that Joey's right. He nods.

Joey beams happily. He floors it. The LTD hurtles blindly into the fog at breakneck speed.

--Joey and Joseph Telegen

Vision of "Fran"

I see the sky, pale, faint blue with a hint of white and gray; the sky has a personality. I see big blue faint eyes, I see big eye lashes, I see a hint of a face (enough to see it is a face), I see a faint nose, I see the faint rounding of "her" mouth as she blows a wind that is visual. I see the very air come forth from her lips. I see no completeness of her face just those few features that I mentioned.

As I look above again I see that her eyes are now looking down from the sky, and I notice that she is looking at the unsettled waters that her wind has caused to move with unstoppable movement. The waves are big and foamy with the color of grayish blue with the white foam tracing the edges moving towards the shore. As, I continue to watch, I now see what appears to be a figure or image of a woman that is emerging from the roaring tide.

She comes toward me with an expression, which I assume is sadness; she is holding out her arms as if she is here to comfort me. Her face is the face that only an angel could have, but her face is masked by the blowing of her sheer garment that adorns her. Her flowing garment seems as if it is part of the motion of the waves. I look again and I see the distress in her face, for she and the sky are one. She looks around only to see the destruction of the demolished shore that we once called "paradise." I can now only embrace the distress she was feeling. Her face could not hide the sorrow.

As she looks over the land of destruction, she sees the

dancing of the sand, light golden brown, and the swinging of the dunes. Beyond the recital of the dance, she sees in the distance a building that once stood tall that is now leveled to the ground; the decomposed building is nothing more than wood, dark and wet. To her left she also noticed a pier partially destroyed, that part which allowed each of us to walk on water and bask in the splendor of it all. In my silence, I can only understand the peacefulness of her destruction. My vision of "Fran."

--Bonita Daye



By Holly Kingman

JUDGEMENT DAY

Scene 1: Inmate James Todd sits in his counselor's office.

COUNSELOR: So, Mr. Todd, today is the day.

JAMES: Yes it is. I have waited three years for this day to happen.

COUNSELOR: So, James, what is going to be different this time? You have been to prison three times before, and paroled three times before. So what difference will being paroled this time make?

(James sits back in the chair, forehead wrinkling as he ponders the question the counselor asked.)

JAMES: What is the difference? Me. I am the difference. I am twenty-eight years old and have spent too many years of my life caged like an animal. For the first time in my life, *(voice rises)* I want it. I want to go and be a productive member of this society. I never want to come back into a place like this.

(An eerie silence envelops the room as the counselor stares at James, searching for any form of deceit in his words. Finally the counselor nods his head and speaks.)

COUNSELOR: I hope so James, because you are running out of chances.

JAMES: I will not need anymore chances. I will not be coming back here.

(No more words are spoken as the two men stand and shake hands for what the both hope will be the final farewell.)

SPEAKER: A period of about eight months has passed since that fateful day.

Scene 2: Mr. Todd enters the courtroom

JUDGE: Is the defendant in the courtroom?

DA: Yes, Mr. Todd is present your honor.

JUDGE: (*Gazing over the records sitting in front of him*) Mr. Todd, you have a lengthy criminal history here, which is not good, son.

LAWYER: My client has been a victim of bad circumstances. He has lived his whole life in poverty. He is very sorry for what he has done.

JUDGE: (*The judge nods his head slowly as he stares directly at Mr. Todd's lawyer.*) Well let's proceed. Does your client wish to speak on his own behalf during this sentencing phase?

(*James quickly nods his head yes to his lawyer's glance.*)

DA: With the permission of the court, I would like to have the opportunity for rebuttal, if need arises.

JUDGE: Permission granted.

(*James stands and begins to make his way up to the witness stand, making pleading eye contact with each juror as he passes.*)

LAWYER: Tell me about your childhood, James.

JAMES: My mother raised me and my brother as best she could. We never had a father, I have never met him and I don't know if he is dead or alive. Times were hard, growing up in the projects and all. I remember going to school and the other kids laughing at me because of the clothes I was wearing. My brother and me soon started skipping school to avoid the taunts and laughter.

LAWYER: What did you and your brother do while skipping school?

JAMES: At first we just hung out, mostly just promising ourselves that our kids will never have to go through anything like this, of having to be ashamed of who they are. That soon ended

once we started meeting other kids who were also skipping. We then started going into stores shoplifting and doing whatever else would be fun for the day. You know, like hanging out at the pool parlor. Checking out the real gangsters of the hood, with their big cars and pockets full of money. Man, wasn't nobody laughing at them.

LAWYER: So from the very beginning, your environment planted this deviant seed within you. *(James nods his head yes.)* Moreover, by looking at your record, I see that it was a seed that grew uncontrollably during your lifetime and *(DA cuts him off.)*

DA: Uncontrollably, *(disbelief filling his voice)* Mr. Todd has been to prison for Breaking and Entering, Armed Robbery, and two times for selling drugs. It would seem to me, if there was such a seed, Mr. Todd was not trying to get rid of it, but watering it and nurturing it to full growth.

(The lawyer for Mr. Todd ignores the remarks made by the DA and continues the question.)

LAWYER: Since the District Attorney so kindly brought up your prison terms, how did those help you, James?

JAMES: Help me? Yeah, they helped me alright. They helped me learn how to hate. The only thing you learn in a prison is how to hate. In prison, you learn how to be a predator. I admit that when I was younger, I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the power that being a predator brought. When I was released eight months ago, I honestly wanted to go straight. I tried looking for a job, but who is going to hire an ex-convict with no job skills? No one is, and nobody did. Then my brother was killed and I knew I had to help my mother. She *(the booming voice of the DA is heard and ends James' sentence before it begins.)*

DA: Your mother! Your mother what, Mr. Todd? *(the DA walks around the table seething with anger)* What were you going to help your mother with Mr. Todd. Money? She has never taken a dime from you or your brother. The fact is, that she once told you never to bring that blood money into her house. So money could not have been how you were going to help her. So how were you going to help her? I know, you were going to give her the only thing she wanted in this world, a son she could be proud of. *(James sits motionless on the stand as the DA's words pound at him.)* I'll show you how you helped your mother. *(The DA points to the back of the courtroom.)*

(James sees the lone figure in the back of the courtroom. His mother wearing her good luck red sweater, sits with her face buried deep in her hands and her body shaking violently from the sobs that curse through it. James' face is a mask of confusion, as he stares at the woman who was not in the courtroom a few minutes ago. James begins to frantically look around the courtroom as he realizes something is not right.)

JUDGE: Members of the jury, you have heard the testimony. His destiny is in your hands. *(James sits on the witness stand, eyes wide searching the courtroom for his mother who is no longer there. Sweat begins to form across his brow as the judge speaks.)*

JUDGE: Members of the jury, have you reached a verdict?

JURY: Yes, we have.

JUDGE: What is your decision?

JURY: *(Chants getting louder each time)* guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty

JUDGE: The verdict is accepted.

JAMES: What? What? Where is my mother?

JUDGE: Son, I'm sorry, but you will never see your mother again. Lucifer you can take him! It seems he has been yours all along.

(A sudden flash of dark light fills the courtroom, leaving behind evil standing in front of the judge)

JAMES: *(Face slick with sweat and tears, pleads with the court)*
Just give me one more chance.

LUCIFER: Chance, why? You are about to go where you have been trying to get to your whole life.

JAMES: NO! NO!

LUCIFER: What? You were my friend for many, many years. Now I take it that you don't want to be friends anymore? I am going to help you James, by introducing you to your father, and reuniting you with your brother, for what are friends for Mr. Todd? ...and James, we will be friends forever.

JAMES: *(Yells)* NOOOOO!

(In a busy Emergency room of a hospital, a solemn faced doctor walks over to a sobbing woman draped in a red sweater. The woman looks up with eyes red and puffy from too many tears. The look she sees on the doctor's face confirms what she already knew. The scream of the woman is heard throughout the hospital for her son, James Todd, is no longer a part of this earth.)

SPEAKER: This was just a play, a play that is happening every day in this world. None can escape Judgement Day, and I will always be there for my friends. *(A snake-like tongue flicks out of the speaker's mouth)*

Are you my friend?

— Jesse Battle





By Holly Kingman



Essays

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The Struggles of Being a Young Mother

As a young parent determined to provide a better life for my family, I began setting goals for myself. My first goal was to become a nurse, so I enrolled into a local community college for the Medical Assistant Program. It was through the journal entries assigned by my English instructor that I began expressing myself on paper. This writing experience would change my life forever.

One of the writing assignments consisted of reading a newspaper or magazine article. While skimming through the Essence magazine, I came across an article entitled, "Why Help Teenage Mothers?" This article related to me and I began to read it. The writer was biased against providing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) by giving Food Stamps and Medicaid as well as educational support and services. The writer felt that these mothers should be forced to quit school and to work to support their children. She felt that government should not provide educational support to teenage mothers.

Later in the evening, after all homework assignments were completed and my children were asleep, I began writing a heated, passionate response article explaining my situation to the writer. I questioned her with "Who wants to be on Public Assistance?" The reality of being on public assistance is anything but pleasant and easy. First, I had to give private information to strange people about how I became pregnant. In addition I had to stand in long lines with many other people whether it was raining, sleeting, snowing, or incredibly hot, just to receive my food stamps. I was confronted with negative facial expressions and verbal communications by the shoppers because they looked in my cart at the

quantity of food and knew that I received food stamps. Even when I went to the bank to cash my AFDC check, I got negative responses. It's not easy to be on public assistance, contrary to the writer's opinion.

Why not approve educational assistance? The government should support teen mothers so they can get good jobs. Sooner or later, teen mothers will not qualify for some jobs unless they have a high school diploma. To live comfortably, they need a secondary education. How can they educate their children if they are not educated? After all, these children will be our future generation!

As I continued to write, I began to think about how and why the very act of becoming a teenage parent had happened to me. Clearly, there was a pattern of not feeling loved, not feeling worthy, not feeling good about myself. The desire to be loved, accepted and understood played an important role. I was willing to do whatever it took to accommodate my desires, no matter what the cost. In my anatomy and physiology class, I was taught that anything abnormal, whether it be physical, mental, or spiritual, is considered to be a sickness, a disease. Through diagnosing my illness, I discovered that having sex and children eliminated the symptoms, but the disease still existed. Teen mothers need to understand this vicious cycle through education.

In my quest for future career choices such as LPN, RN, or physician's assistant, I would like to work in a medical facility that will enable me to become an ally for teenage mothers providing education, quality health care, and answers to unanswered questions. My goal is to assist them with eliminating any stumbling blocks that will prevent them from becoming productive, responsible young adult mothers.

— Patrice Harris

My Most Horrific Memory

Hundreds of people relinquish life due to motorcycle accidents. We never stop to think or prepare ourselves for tomorrow until it is too late. "It could never happen to me" is a phrase that I will never forget. If I were an angel, perhaps, then I could have prevented an event that has changed my life forever.

Thinking about the day James brought his new street bike home brings back many unforgettable memories. He was so excited that it was written all over his face. I have to admit it was a very nice motorcycle. We had talked about them often, but I never expected him to go out and buy one. From the minute I laid eyes on it, I got a bad feeling. Lately, I had been the one to ruin things, so I kept my mouth shut. Personally, I felt it was too much for him. However, if the bike made him happy, that was all that mattered to me. James had worked so hard for the bike.

In fact, his friends were shocked, too. They couldn't believe he had a brand new motorcycle. This was nothing compared to a dirt bike! Everyone wanted to ride. Some of his friends had never been on a motorcycle before. Little did they know, it was not something that could be learned in a couple of minutes. It took a lot of practice and coordination. Maybe that's why I got tipped three times! They knew nothing about riding, but everyone waited for a turn on the bike.

After a few days, the hysteria had died down. James was riding more, but he still didn't have it down yet. That's what the riding class was for. In order to legally ride a motorcycle a class was required, then an endorsement was issued to put on the driver's license. He didn't have time with

such a busy schedule. Besides, getting in an accident could never happen to him. That was the last thing he wanted to hear! Life for us right was going too well. Just getting engaged, we were finally on our own. We had just gotten settled in a new trailer. With a new car and a ten thousand-dollar bike, there was no room for disaster. So we thought, anyway.

It was Father's Day. I woke in a blissful mood. I had planned to spend the afternoon with my dad. He always cooked on the grill during special occasions. James and I rode to Hillsborough together in the car. We spent the majority of the day with my family. Around four o'clock we decided to leave. It was an hour drive, and we were also supposed to go look at a house that was for sale, not to mention the fact that we had to visit his dad.

On the way to Raleigh, we stopped off at his boss's house, because he had left the bike there the night before. "Follow me," he yelled, as he caught a wheel out of his boss's driveway. I remember him making the engine squeal to show how much power it had. "He's gonna kill himself on that thing," was a repeated reaction from others. I followed him a few miles to his dad's house. Today would be his first glance at the bike. I had always been scared to ride, especially because he was an inexperienced driver. I trusted him though; he would never let anything happen to me. I thought he would park the bike at his dad's, but he wanted to take me for a ride. I agreed to ride only if I had a helmet. His mom lived nearby and drives a Harley, so I could borrow hers. I had always wanted to ride a motorcycle. Although it was getting late, it seemed to be a great idea at the moment.

I was supposed to meet him at his mom's, which was just down the road. I left first, because usually he'd beat me

there. His bike would go 190 miles an hour. Knowing the power it had frightened me. With bad thoughts running through my head, I pulled into the driveway. Being only a couple minutes ahead, I was expecting him to show up momentarily. He was the type of person that was never on time!

I was waiting in the driveway impatiently. I was ready to go. It was almost dark, and I surely didn't want to ride in the dark. Plus, he had gotten me all worked up about this little house that we were supposed to go see. What was taking so long? Possibly, had he gone back to our house? Something wasn't right. I was beginning to get worried. He should have been there already. I had our house keys, so I decided to leave.

On the road again, I came around the bend and saw shoes in the middle of the road. What were they doing there? And that bike, one I had seen before, was lying in the field! Acting by instinct, I jumped out of the car. Running through the grassy field, I heard a soft moan. Loosing my balance, I tripped over what appeared to be a cracked helmet. The moaning was getting worse. I felt like I was running in circles. The grass was so tall and thick it was hard to see.

Coming closer to a pond on the edge of the field, I saw his helpless body in the brush. I could not believe my eyes! It was the worst accident I had ever seen. There was nothing I could do. In a state of confusion, I began to cry. There was no way I could take him to the hospital. His legs were crushed from the knees down. Just then noticing all the blood, I began to shake uncontrollably.

Both of us were in shock; it seemed as if time were moving extremely slowly. I grabbed his hand to try to com-

fort him, while crying and screaming for help. Someone had to have seen something. If I could only take the pain away until help arrived. With things not looking good, I said a prayer to myself. I knew this was my only hope. The situation was out of my hands.

His was the most helpless cry I'd ever heard. The pain was unbearable. I kept telling him that help was on the way. Then, I remember riding in the ambulance. The ride seemed to last forever. In an agonizing voice, he asked, "Am I going to die?" By then we had reached the hospital. The Chaplain met me at the door. He took in a room and tried to calm me down. That is the last event I can recall.

To only be twenty-one, he has been through a lot. But he wasn't alone. Through his eight surgeries, and then through an additional month of hospitalization, we have stuck together. We are best friends. To this day he is still unable to walk or maneuver around the house. He spends most of his day in a hospital bed. I thank God he has people that love him.

This event has changed my life tremendously. I really can't say anything *great* has come out of it, but I do value each moment we spend together. Who knows what will happen tomorrow? Throughout the past four months of my life, I realize how many true friends I have. I believe my life has changed, because this has made me a stronger person. This is my proof that we do have guardian angels watching over us.

— Catherine Lowe



Mayonnaise on Both Sides

My bedroom always felt 20 degrees cooler than the rest of the house. My room was directly over the garage where the snow blower resided. Of course it was cold. I believed that snow blowers came from the North Pole and had to be kept in climate controlled conditions. Our garage was the perfect habitat. My father would wake me up on those cold, inky mornings to get ready for school. I would have to walk to my old grade school first, then catch bus #47 to my Catholic Junior High.

I would drag into the kitchen, hair like a fright wig and flannel pj's, and my dad would be there with all smiles and good mornings. The ritual was simple. I would eat the cereal of the moment, well sort of. The spoon more often than not would make contact with my mouth. My dad listening and whistling to the radio, and he'd read off the time every so often, because he knew the next hour of my day would be spent transforming my little-girl-self into something more womanly and presentable for my new school and new grade. I was thirteen, trying hard to push eighteen, but my parents pushed back.

I made the impossible trip down the hall (about 10 feet) to the bathroom, dreading the fact that I would have to get in the shower and be cold afterwards; my hair, which would be wet and impossible to work with; and my slippers, which would have cooled, while their residents stood in lukewarm water.

I would dry my hair and begin the arduous process of curling it. In five minute intervals -- a knock on my door, and the time. A difficult and critical decision had to be made

each day, what to wear? When I was sure I could live with the choice, I emerged from my room having completed the transformation from caterpillar to caterpillar. The only real difference in my appearance from the early show at breakfast was hairspray.

By then my dad was packing my lunch. In a crumpled, recycled brown sandwich bag, my noontime eats were carefully placed: two dimes for two milks (still a growing kid) and bologna sandwiches with cheese. Every day for four years, until the tuition became impossible and my parents pulled me from my Catholic cocoon, I had the same lunch. Slight variations were egg salad or the ever-popular pb-n-j.

I never noticed the difference between good times and bad times when my parents struggled with money. They were all good times. With my mother's financial wizardry, we didn't know the difference between their money feast and famine. They gave us that priceless gift of a happy childhood.

I never eat bologna sandwiches anymore, but I will never forget those mornings, where the kitchen was always warm and sunny because of the bright face making my lunch. Most of all it was happy, with my dad whistling to the music and asking, "Mayonnaise on both sides?"

— Theresa Pannesi



Brenda Sue

My sister, Brenda Sue, lay on the gurney in the intensive care unit with a bullet in her head. Reflecting on the day my sister shot herself reminds me of the devastating effects of a suicide and the emotional roller coaster a family has to go through. Some of the most difficult decisions of our lives were made in the days that followed, and we all grew a little as a result of this tragic event.

Brenda Sue and I grew up together with only a year separating us. My mother often called her by her first and middle name, and that stuck with her into adult life. As children, we were "partners in crime," often talking each other into doing something that we both knew was wrong. We both married at about the same time and separated from each other to form our own families. As we struggled to raise our families, we stayed in touch with each other by telephone. She had two children, Joshua and Trisha, and most of our conversations centered on the task of raising our children.

Late one November night, I was startled awake by a ringing telephone. Immediately, my stomach turned as I wondered who would be calling at such an hour. Answering the phone confirmed my worst fears. It was my mother, calling to inform me that Brenda Sue had been shot in the head and was in serious condition at a Pontiac, Michigan hospital. I was in shock and tried to get more details from her, but she was very upset and crying too hard to give me much information. We continued to talk for the better part of an hour trying to make arrangements for the long trip to Michigan.

We agreed that my mother, my younger sister, Karen, and my brother, John, would fly to Nashville, and I would meet them at the airport. My father lived the closest and would meet us at the hospital the next day. We then

drove from Nashville to Michigan in my small Ford Fairmont. The stony silence made the trip seem like an eternity. My mother stared blankly at the highway; I noticed she seemed much older than I remembered. Karen sat in the back seat weeping occasionally, but otherwise was quiet. My brother, who was only six years old, colored in his new coloring book, unaware of the grave condition his older sister was in. We all hoped she would still be alive when we got there.

When we arrived at the hospital, we were led to a small family room. As we waited for the doctor to appraise Brenda's condition, I could not help but notice the antiseptic smell of the hospital. It seemed to imply that only the sick, hurt, or dying resided there. When the doctor told us that Brenda Sue was still alive, we all felt relieved. However, our hopes were crushed when he told us that she would probably not survive the day. He explained that the bullet had entered her brain behind her right ear and, instead of exiting, had bounced around destroying a large amount of brain tissue, effectively leaving her brain dead. About this time, a police officer entered the room. It was then that we learned it was self-inflicted. I was floored. How could she do such a thing without trying to talk with me? My mother was crying again as the doctor asked us if we would like to see her. He recommended that John not join us because of the emotional impact it might have on a six-year-old. He tried to prepare us for what we would see, explaining her body's reaction to the trauma. There was a lot of swelling; we may not recognize her.

We were horrified at the sight of my sister lying on the bed in intensive care. Although the doctor had tried to forewarn us about the swelling, I was appalled. Even the

rings on her finger were cutting into her skin. Barely recognizing her, I started crying. My mother trembled as I hugged her. My father immediately left the room without saying a word. And there was that damn antiseptic smell. We all had to leave.

After returning to the family room, we were met by Lisa, the nurse assigned to us by the doctor. She was compassionate, but had the difficult task of explaining the options available to us. She informed us that the first test for brain activity came back negative, and they would do one more the next day. In the meantime, we needed to discuss the possibility of taking her off the life support system in the event the second test also came back negative. She also asked us to consider donating her organs in the event she died. We decided right there that Brenda Sue would have wanted that, so we gave the permission to have her organs harvested if she died.

We left the hospital and went to my father's house in St. Helen, Michigan. We sat in his large living room and discussed our options. At issue was whether or not we wanted to have her remain on life support if the second brain scan came back negative. This was a very difficult decision. Although deep within ourselves we wanted to believe that Brenda Sue might somehow pull through this, we also knew from the doctor's report that this was very unlikely. We decided that we just couldn't let her suffer for a long period of time. Therefore, we would have her removed from life support and let her go. We also had to decide whether we wanted to have her buried in Michigan or to have her cremated and sent back to Florida with my mother. For mostly financial and sentimental reasons, we decided that we would have her body cremated and her remains sent back to Florida where she grew up. Exhausted, we all went to bed.

The next day was cold and blustery. I noticed that the wind was blowing the snow into little whirlwinds on the ground. As my family started piling into the car, I began to reminisce about some of the good times my sister and I had. I also shared this with my mother. I asked her why she had always called her Brenda Sue. She said she was always called Sue Ellen by her mother and she guessed she just passed that along to Brenda Sue. My father added that all our names had a special meaning, and that since I was his first son, he had me named after him. Everyone's spirit seemed to pick up after that. All the way back to the hospital the conversations centered around the good times we had.

Back in the small family room at the hospital, Lisa told us that the second test had also come back negative. And the doctor had Brenda Sue declared brain dead. She asked if we had made a decision. Almost in unison, we told her they had our permission to disconnect the life support systems and let her pass away. Lisa seemed to appreciate the unanimous decision we had made. Lisa then asked if we would like to say goodbye to her one last time. We agreed that we wanted to remember Brenda Sue for the good times and did not want to see her again.

I look back on these events with deep respect for my family. We made some hard choices and learned to live with them in a positive sort of a way. We talk a lot more to each other and have agreed that if we found ourselves in a situation that seemed hopeless we would pick up the phone and call someone. I have only one regret; after all... she never said goodbye.

— Larry Appleton

THE UNKNOWN HEROES

Envision yourself working for the strongest, most powerful company in the world. You love your job, you work hard, you are proud of your work, and proud of where you work – at this company. An employee list is printed where you work at this company; however – you cannot find your name. You look, and look, and look again at the employee list from your company where YOU work, where YOU have put in some long hours – NOTHING – WAIT, on the list where YOUR name should be, it reads: “The Unknown Employee.” But you were not forgotten, or were you?

I stand before you today to pay tribute to a group of people I don’t even know. I don’t know where they were from, how old they were, their race, not even their names. What I do know is that they were Americans and that they served in one of the four military armed forces: the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines. They died serving their country so that YOU and I could be here today – free. They died to gain the great honor of being anonymous, for the people I’m paying tribute to today somehow gained the title of “The Unknown Soldiers.”

Envision with me a soldier, strong, powerful, brave, and serving his or her country, because they loved their country. These soldiers were proud of what their country stood for: democracy, freedom, and liberty! These soldiers worked and served hard in a war for their country, but when the war

was over, no one knew their names. But these soldiers were not forgotten – or were they?

Which war did the Unknown Soldier die in? It doesn't matter. WW I, WW II, Vietnam, The Bay of Pigs, supposedly, it was all for the same cause – democracy, freedom, liberty. How did these soldiers die? It doesn't matter. Butchered, decapitated, blown to pieces -- just a few possibilities that makes a soldier unrecognizable. But supposedly their death was all for the same cause -- democracy, freedom, liberty! But they weren't forgotten, or were they?

The answer is "NO," because I stand before you today paying tribute to these unknown soldiers that made it possible for YOU and I to be here today – free.

So, next Memorial Day, when you are out barbecuing or at the beach, take a moment to think, not only of soldiers that are alive and known, but of the dead and unknown. Remember these American soldiers as they are and were: brave, proud, strong, powerful, but most of all, heroes. And never forgotten.

I just wanted to take a moment and tell them, "thank you."

— Lisa Amaro



Final Four '98: Rock Solid

It's always refreshing when a basketball video game comes out that does not rely on flaming hoops, super-human dunks and exploding backboards. Sometimes, the authentic aspects of the sport are enough, especially when the game play more than makes up for any lack of omitted features in the game. Mindscape's new NCAA basket ball game for Sony Play Station is one example of a back-to basics basketball game. The truth is, Final Four '98 is not an extraordinary basketball title; there are really no breakthrough developments guaranteed to make one jump out of one's seat. Having said that, however, Final Four '98 is about as solid a college basketball game as one can get for the Play Station, the kind of game that leaves no stone unturned, and no option overlooked. The game's authenticity and game play make Final Four'98 as solid as a rock.

The attention to detail is evident from the moment one selects his or her squad. Sixty-four NCAA teams are featured, each with a roster of 12 players (every player is rated by strength, aptitude, ball handling, speed, endurance, jumping, blocking, and shooting). One's starting lineup is customizable to one's specifications. Once one selects his or her team and the opposing team, there is a world of options to tailor the game to one's liking. The game includes four camera angles and two camera height levels to choose from, four levels of difficulty and halves of two, five, 10, 15, or 20 minutes. One can play an exhibition game, a full season or in a tournament; choose whether there is player fatigue, injuries, or automatic substitutions. All NCAA rules and regulations apply: five-second inbound, 10-second back court, three-in-the key, traveling, goaltending, etc. In Simulation

mode, all rules can be turned on or off; in Arcade mode, all rules are abolished for a wild, anything-goes type of game.

As for the game play, Final Four '98 is as solid as they come. Controlling one's team is a breeze, and following the team's action dredges up none of the "Who's got the ball?" syndrome commonly found in five-on-five basketball games. On the court, Final Four '98 allows one to coach his or her team as if one were on the sideline. The offensive strategy can change from a High Post to a Double Down, or even an Inside Triangle. If one is not satisfied with his or her defensive setup, one can easily change his or her formation set by a touch of a button. The level of defensive pressure is adjustable, and board crashing (rebounding) can be toggled on or off. Player animations are smooth and realistic (close inspection reveals such nuances as moving heads and different body types), and uniform/arena colors and logos are all accurate and intact.

To conclude, while nothing about Final Four '98 can be classified as revolutionary, this is still one top-notch basketball game for the college ball enthusiast who just wants to play ball.

— Zadoc Robinson, Jr.





